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SEN. JACQUE BILL RECOGNIZING VIETNAM ERA HMONG AND LAOTIAN VETERAN SERVICE CLEARS ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE

Bill recognizes allies who fought on the side of liberty in the 'Secret War' in Laos

MADISON... Hmong and Laotian allies who fought on the side of liberty with U.S. soldiers would be formally recognized as Wisconsin veterans under legislation that cleared an Assembly committee today, following passage in the full Senate last month.

State Sen. André Jacques, author of the bill, said the long-overdue recognition honors the courage and extraordinary sacrifice of these unsung heroes who put their lives on the line for the values and beliefs that we revere as Americans.

"These brave fighters provided vital intelligence, air rescue for downed American pilots and direct engagement in combat operations in service to our country, at the cost of tens of thousands of lives," Sen. Jacques said. "American troops relied heavily on the outnumbered Hmong Special Guerilla Units to intercept and prevent the flow of troops and war supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and fly thousands of deadly combat support missions."

Sen. Jacques said the legislation would expand the state definition of "veteran" in Wisconsin statute to include individuals who honorably served in Special Guerilla Units operating in Laos from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975, under the exemptions enumerated in the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000. That designation would qualify these veterans for certain state veterans' benefits, following proper documentation and a thorough U.S. Department of Defense review.

Sen. Jacques said this recognition is about much more than benefits to the roughly 1,000 Hmong and Laotian veterans living in Wisconsin, many of whom suffered brutal acts of retribution and atrocities by the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army after the war.

"Most importantly, this legislation provides long overdue recognition and appreciation for the bravery and sacrifice of these unsung heroes," Sen. Jacques said. "We have an opportunity to correct our statutes and ensure that their service to freedom and our country will not be forgotten."

The bill ([Assembly Bill 27/Senate Bill 2](#)) previously passed the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs, which Sen. Jacques chairs, in a bipartisan 4-1 vote. It must next pass the full Assembly, and be signed by the Governor, to become law.

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